



NDOT NEWS

Quarterly News of the Nevada Department of Transportation

Spring 2000



**Making a Difference
Today and Tomorrow**

The Director's Corner

**Tom
Stephens,
P.E., Director**



Enlibra Principles

*for natural resource and
environmental decisions*

- **National standards, neighborhood solutions—Assign responsibilities at the right level.**
- **Collaboration, not polarization—Use collaborative process to break down barriers and find solutions.**
- **Reward results, not programs—Move to a performance-based system.**
- **Science for facts, process for priorities—Separate subjective choices from objective data gathering.**
- **Markets before mandates—Pursue economic incentives whenever possible.**
- **Change a heart, change a nation—Environmental understanding is crucial.**
- **Recognition of benefits and costs—Make sure all decisions affecting infrastructure, development and environment are fully informed.**
- **Solutions transcend political boundaries—Use appropriate geographic boundaries for environmental problems.**

Smart Growth . . . All things to all people?

The concept of *Smart Growth* is sweeping the country. It is embraced by both environmentalists and developers. The 3rd Annual Partners for *Smart Growth* Conference that I attended in San Diego in mid-November was literally held in a “big tent.” This national conference was put on by the Urban Land Institute with co-sponsorship by the United States EPA, The Conservation Fund, the Local Government Commission, and the *Smart Growth* Network. Key speakers included a state DOT director, the vice-president of the National Association of Homebuilders, the president of the Trust for Public Lands, and the head of the Conservation Fund. The concluding session was a discussion by Democratic Governor Parris Glendening of Maryland and Republican Governor Mike Leavitt of Utah.

Smart Growth recently came to Las Vegas in the form of a two-day ULI-sponsored conference held at UNLV in mid-March which included presentations just as diverse as those in San Diego. This was preceded last October by “Las Vegas *Smart Growth* Town Hall Meetings” sponsored by the Sierra Club and Citizens Alert. According to a Las Vegas Sierra Club member: “Even though the definition of *Smart Growth* may vary from group to group, a lot of the comments do not.”

So what is *Smart Growth*? According to the ULI publication *Smart Growth: Myth and Fact*, “*Smart Growth* is best defined at the local and regional levels and the ULI does not espouse a universal definition.” However, in answer to the question “Is *Smart Growth* a code word for no growth?” ULI says that “*Smart Growth* recognizes that growth and development are both inevitable and beneficial.” ULI says *Smart Growth* encourages development that meets multiple objectives. ULI states that “Even with a substantially greater investment in transit and pedestrian facilities, new roads will continue to be needed because of population growth and increasing wealth.”

The National Association of Homebuilders in their publication *Smart Growth: Building Better Places to Live, Work and Play* define *Smart Growth* as “meeting the underlying demand for housing created by an ever-increasing population by building a political consensus and employing market-sensitive and innovative land-use planning techniques.” They are quick to point out that “the overwhelming majority of housing consumers are unwilling to settle for anything less than a single-family home in the suburbs.” However, they believe a reasonable balance can be achieved by protecting the environment, preserving open space, improving traffic flow, relieving overcrowded schools and enhancing the quality of life.

In discussing *Smart Growth*, Utah Governor Leavitt put forth the *Enlibra* principles which the National Governors Association has adopted. In February, Governor Kenny Guinn asked all Nevada state agencies to embrace the *Enlibra* principles in making decisions affecting natural resources and the environment (see box).

The *Smart Growth* paradox is that people are against high density development at the same time they are against urban sprawl. I believe that *Smart Growth* provides a forum for diverse groups to come together for a meaningful dialogue leading to reasonable compromises. Let’s all join the discussion.

Partners Deliver the Project

Spaghetti Bowl Finishes Ahead of Schedule

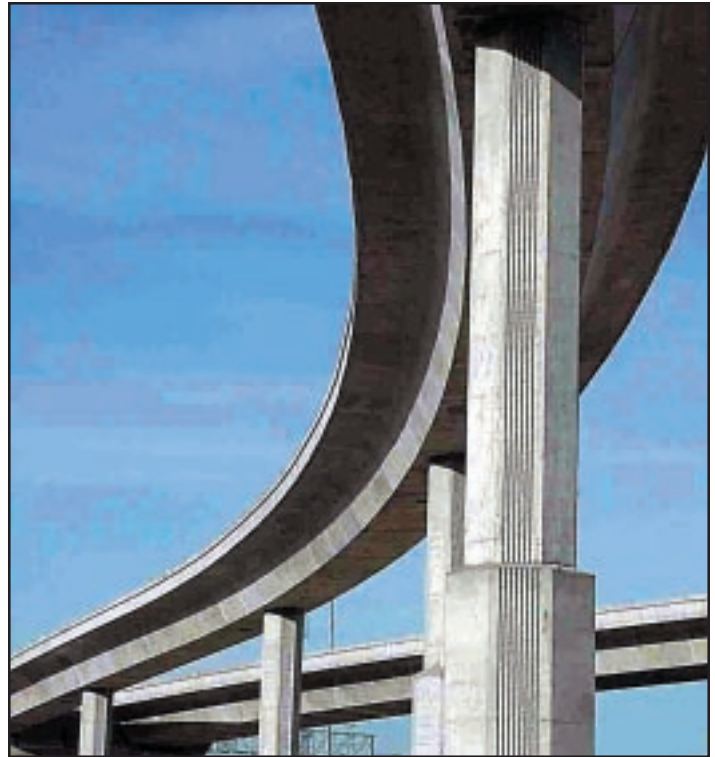
With 40 mph winds for the second time officials gathered to celebrate the opening of a new Spaghetti Bowl structure at Martin Luther King Boulevard, it seemed even the air was in a hurry to see the project through.

Completing more than six months ahead of schedule, the \$92 million rebirth of the Interstate 15 interchange at U.S. 95 turned a traffic lion into a lamb like the March wind that presided over the ceremony.

"The last time I was here it almost blew me off," said Gov. Kenny Guinn, who spent many of his last 30 years navigating the noodles. "I think it is going to help immensely and I want to say thank you to all of the people at NDOT, the contractors and subcontractors. It will help to ease the tension for so many of our people in Las Vegas."

With average daily traffic at 330,000 vehicles, more than 10 times the volume it handled when it opened in 1969, maintaining traffic flow during construction of the five major ramps was a chief challenge for NDOT and Meadow Valley Contractors. Precast bridge segments, a first for Nevada, were the answer that kept lanes open.

"I can honestly say this is the best partnering job I've ever been involved in," said Meadow Valley Vice President Alan Terril. "NDOT put all their resources on it to get things solved whenever we needed them." Meadow Valley began construction



on December 16, 1997. NDOT Resident Engineer Earnest Patton completed the job for Ben Cass, who retired midway.

"I want to thank Crew 926," Director Tom Stephens told elected officials gathered to open the bridge they built.

The final flyover was also a Las Vegas first—at 70 feet above the ground the Martin Luther King Boulevard exit from I-15 is the city's tallest road. The three-quarter-mile ramp that restored direct community access includes a 1,772-foot, 15-span segmental bridge. It completes the interchange now capable of serving 500,000 vehicles a day, with a life span of at least 20 years.

"This represents access to the community and access to work. It symbolizes the economic vitality of Las Vegas," said



From left: State Controller Kathy Augustine, Transportation Board Member Father Caesar Caviglia, North Las Vegas City Councilman John Rhodes, Regional Transportation Commission Vice Chair Bryan Nix, City of Las Vegas Mayor Pro-Tem Michael McDonald (hidden), Sen. Richard Bryan, Gov. Kenny Guinn, Director Tom Stephens, Regional Flood Control District Chair Larry Brown, Sen. Harry Reid, Clark County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson-Gates, Resident Engineer Earnest Patton, Parsons Brinckerhoff Vice President Sam Tso, Meadow Valley's Ken Hoover and Project Manager Tom Greco.

Engineering Design Consultant Parsons Brinckerhoff's Sam Tso. He and NDOT project manager Tom Greco have been partners in the project for more than nine years. For Greco, who has lived the project's life since the planning stage, through the environmental process, design and construction, the project symbolizes something different.

"This is like seeing your youngster graduate from high school," Greco said. "It's pretty much the same except without the cap and gown."

High Stakes

Building Consensus for I-580



To blend naturally or to create a landmark, to build barriers or bike paths, choose asphalt or concrete? Design alternatives abound for a project with the scope and sensitivity of Interstate 580 south of Reno.

The 8.5-mile freeway extension from Mt. Rose Highway to Bowers Mansion Road crosses the southern Truckee Meadows on the Biggest Little City's

south side, peaceful Pleasant Valley and north Washoe Valley at the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountain range.

A commercial and commuter route that, with U.S. 50, links Lake Tahoe, Carson City and Reno, U.S. 395 is the existing connection of Reno's I-580 with western Nevada to Carson City and parts south. Two lanes in some places and four in others, the route is strained by

developing communities and increasing traffic. The corridor for its replacement, I-580, passes some of the most treasured wetlands and wildlife habitat and is set on a rocky mountainside with steep slopes, large ravines and tough terrain.

With so much sensitivity and so much at stake, NDOT

approached the prospect of a high profile project in its infancy with a dedication to a multi-faceted public involvement program to keep interested people, stakeholders, not just informed but actively involved as the project came to life.

"The public outreach program involves environmental agencies, local officials and the general public to evaluate engineering details of the selected corridor," said Todd Montgomery, project manager for NDOT.

NDOT's objective was to build project support, involve communities and obtain concurrence from regulators to set up a smooth transition all the way through final design. The partners agreed to work as a team, provide value and strike a balance for all.

While Montgomery served as the department's focal point, engineers and support people from many different disciplines were required to consider a project of I-580's magnitude.

Geotechnical engineers work with the rock and soil, bridge designers join

Increased development and commuter traffic demand a new freeway for the environmentally sensitive and geologically challenging corridor from Reno to Carson City.

hydraulic engineers, landscape architects and roadbed designers draw on planners. Then, right of way experts provide them the canvass to paint the ultimate picture of their public works project.

And they are just the tip of the iceberg.

For I-580, Leslie Regos' role began in September 1998. As a facilitator for CH2MHill with a public administration and planning background, Regos has been successfully gaining public comment and earning support for West Coast engineering projects for several years. Regos and consultant project manager Cindy Potter joined Montgomery to develop consensus. At least 12 other subconsultants were hired for engineering the \$250 million project which originally cleared the environmental process more than 15 years before.

While NDOT spent years producing a viable Environmental Impact Statement that established the 1000-foot corridor, time had passed, the community changed and the department was seeing new faces in new places.

NDOT's objective was to build project support, involve communities and obtain concurrence from regulators to set up a smooth transition all the way through final design. The partners agreed to work as a team, provide value and strike a balance for all.

To bring players up to speed and ultimately gain their support, the department employed a participatory public involvement process that involves education. Stakeholders see what NDOT does and why, what the constraints are and what is realistically possible.

NDOT identified more than 25 groups, public and private, that had a continuing stake in the freeway's development. They became known as the Stakeholders Working Group. From the Pleasant Valley Landowners to the Sierra Club, the Army Corps of Engineers to the East Washoe Valley Citizens Advisory Board,

Stakeholders Working Group

**Army Corps of Engineers
Bureau of Land Management
East Washoe Valley CAB*
Federal Highway Administration
Galena Steamboat CAB*
Individual Landowner
Individual Local Planning Consultant
Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
Nevada Highway Patrol
Nevada Department of Transportation
Pleasant Valley Landowners Association
Regional Transportation Commission
Reno-Sparks Chamber of Commerce
RTC Citizens Advisory Committee
Sierra Club
Southwest CAB*
Steamboat Creek Restoration Committee
Truckee Meadows Trail Association
U.S. Fish and Wildlife
U.S. Forest Service
Washoe County Community Development
Washoe County Parks Department
Washoe County Public Works
Washoe Tribe
West Washoe Association
West Washoe CAB*
*citizen advisory board**

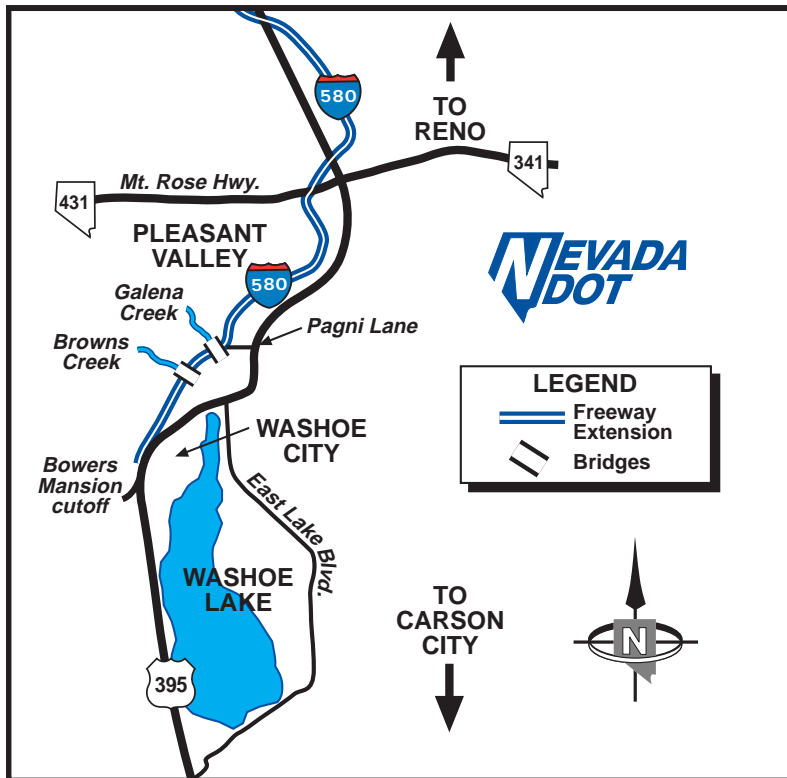


Led by consultant CH2MHill's Leslie Regos, stakeholders met to shape a freeway's future.



“The implementation of this aggressive public involvement program has served as a great tool for addressing issues in the social, political, economic and environmental arenas; some that were previously considered beyond the typical scope of the engineering community.”

Todd Montgomery
NDOT Project Manager



The First Fruits: SWG Recommendations

- Undivided Roadway Alignment
- Pleasant Valley Retaining Walls
- Galena Arch Design
- Frontage Road/Davis Creek Park Road Configuration
- Median Turnarounds
- Higher Barrier Wall-42 inches vs. 32 inches
- Asphalt Paving vs. Concrete
- RWIS and Anti-Icing Systems
- Bridge and Headwall Aesthetic Theme
- Water Quality Treatment—basins, sand and soil separators
- Erosion Control Test Plots
- Revegetation Program
- Bicycle Path at Mt. Rose Interchange
- Public Involvement Process

the Washoe Tribe to the Regional Transportation Commission, stakeholders all wore different hats but came together at NDOT’s invitation with one goal: work it out.

Why Now?

“We believe it is worth spending this time early in the process to more effectively meet community needs,” said Susan Martinovich, NDOT’s assistant director for engineering. By adding a few months on the front end of the project, the department will save time in the future by seeking resolution to concerns in the beginning.

Traffic projections predict that volumes will increase more than 80 percent by 2015 in the corridor, an increase that U.S. 395 cannot safely handle. Funding for projects in Nevada is very competitive. With great traffic demands from explosive growth in Las Vegas, Nevada has several super projects in the pipeline that will tap resources and funding. Disagreement that brings delay could set the project back 10 to 15 years. Mutual trust and respect would move it forward. There is incentive to do the right thing and to do it right.

So the stakeholders were asked to speak up.

Their first step was to devote enough time to gain a thorough understanding of the project.

“They learned a lot about many things,” Regos said. “That helped them appreciate what our options were.”

Next, they established a solid framework for working together by developing procedures for communication and agreeing upon the decision-making processes. They set expectations on how technical questions would be answered and conflicts resolved. They made a full-year commitment to shape the face of the freeway’s future, taking it all the way to 30 percent of design.

“A 30 percent design gives us all the information we need to start final plans and designs, where it is going, alignment, vertical grades, slopes, bridge types and right of way needs—answers to all the big questions,” Montgomery said.

At that stage stakeholders were expected to help pick an alignment within the approved corridor, select bridge types and locations and give valuable input on design characteristics

such as barrier rail, noise barriers, pavement preferences and erosion control facilities.

Their first accomplishment was to comb through 26 alternatives for the preferred alignment. They chose one that would reduce the freeway's presence, minimize cuts and fills to the hillside, place bridges at major drainage points. It provides important access for wildlife and recreational users to cross the facility and blends native vegetation and natural textures into the landscape.

"Along the way we were tweaking and changing things," Regos said.

Meeting more than 18 times in 16 months, the stakeholders made decisions using prioritized and weighted criteria for each issue they faced. Among them were preserving native habitat, freeway safety, protecting local creeks, addressing noise and minimizing the freeway's footprint on the hillside.

For bridges, stakeholders weighed a natural blend but also saw value in a dramatic structure, ultimately selecting two arch bridges for Galena Creek that will become the longest and tallest in the state. Concrete was a concern for many reasons. Among them, increased noise was perceived undesirable and snow and ice removal more difficult in the shadow of the Sierra, where peaks rise above 10,000 feet.

By the time they were finished the stakeholders had worked together to achieve consensus about where the freeway would be placed, the required right of way and bridge structures. A set of guidelines for aesthetic features produced by the group will help NDOT during the final design and construction phases providing direction on visual treatments and blending the freeway into its new home. As good neighbors, they even addressed the impact of construction access on existing residential neighborhoods.

In the end, stakeholders built the best project possible.

“They were extremely even-handed, fair, understanding and patient. Patience was the virtue that would get you through this process.”

**Bob Rusk,
West Washoe
Citizen Advisory Board**

"They were comfortable with what we had done to get the best. People said, 'I can live with it,' even if they wanted other things at first," Regos said.

Bob Rusk, who represented the West Washoe Citizen Advisory Board agrees on that point.



Martinovich explains the project.

"I'm very complimentary of the result. I wondered how it would work," he said. Rusk, who served as a Washoe County commissioner in the 1970s when the alignment was first being discussed, was able to share some of the history with

other stakeholders.

"We rolled up our sleeves and came up with the best design that would be the least intrusive to the people who live nearby," Rusk said.

Supporting the Stakeholders

Independent in their analysis, the stakeholders were far from alone in the process. NDOT made available the project management team of engineers and consultants and kept a close working relationship with management on the project steering team that included Martinovich on behalf of NDOT; Derek Morse, Washoe County Regional Transportation Commission; Ted Short, Washoe County Commission; Dave Roundtree, Washoe

County Public Works; and Todd Jorgenson, Federal Highway Administration. It was interaction, with questions answered, that worked best, according to the stakeholders.

"When we needed it, NDOT went further and got even more expertise for us to help us understand that their recommendations weren't arbitrary technical decisions," Rusk said. "Once they did that, the sale was made."

Rusk said that Montgomery and Regos did their jobs well. "They were extremely even-handed, fair, understanding and patient. Patience was the virtue that would get you through this process."

Through final design and construction, expected by 2002, stakeholders have agreed to remain involved to ensure adherence to guidelines, provide consultation for change and give support through the funding process.

"We built a consensus among volunteers with the communities' best interest at heart, willing to tackle some tough traffic safety and congestion issues facing the region," Martinovich said.

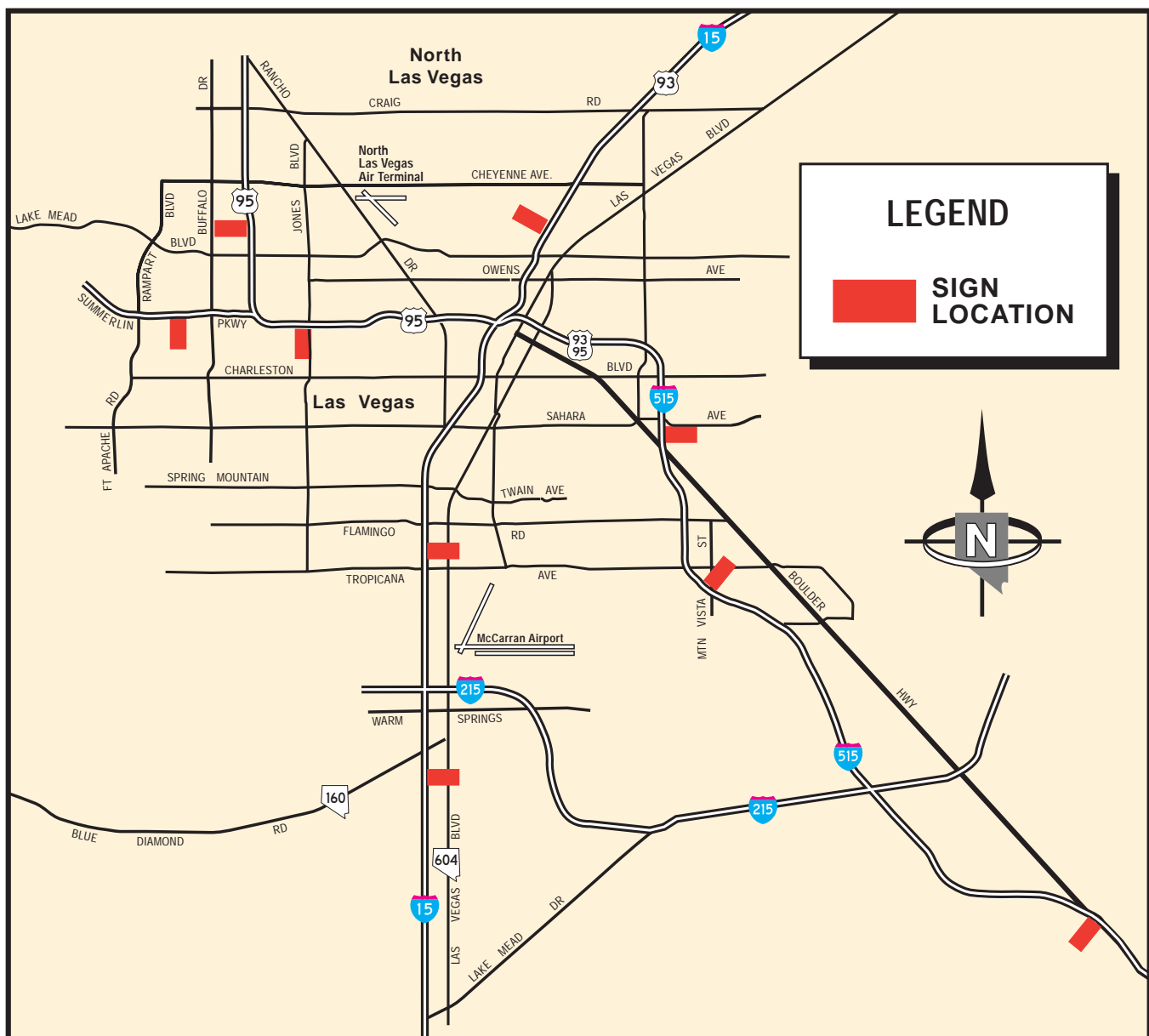
The result—a project moving forward with funding allocated for a safe, new and welcome freeway facility.

Through final design and construction, expected by 2002, stakeholders have agreed to remain involved to ensure adherence to guidelines, provide consultation for change and give support through the funding process.

What is 8 feet by 30 feet and can tell what's

As more computerized traffic management systems come online in the region, the signs will be plugged into even more transportation networks.

The Future is Now



ahead better than a crystal ball?

The answer debuts on Las Vegas freeways this fall in the form of dynamic message signs. Intended to offer a heads up to motorists who are about to approach a highway incident affecting traffic ahead of them, the signs will begin appearing in nine locations on Interstate 15 and U.S. 95 throughout Clark County. Each location was strategically chosen to give motorists the chance to take alternate routes.

The first of their kind for NDOT, the signs are similar to those currently used in northern Nevada's Washoe Valley for wind advisories and to larger signs on Mt. Rose Highway and U.S. 50 in advance of Spooner Summit that warn of weather related road conditions. Capable of greater graphic presentation, the new version of the dynamic message signs chosen for Las Vegas will be full-matrix type that are not bound by lines of text. While the database for the DMS can store more than 50 preprogrammed messages, the screen can also display any symbols, letters and words created to meet special conditions.

Messages can be displayed to announce transportation incidents, lane restrictions, detours, construction and road weather information.

Specially designed to withstand intense desert heat, the permanent signs are better than portable for many reasons, according to Don Campbell, NDOT's traffic engineer assigned to oversee the project. Mounted over the lanes, they are safer and more visible to a greater number of drivers in all traffic lanes.

With the main purpose to reduce delay, the dynamic message sign's job is to guide motorists approaching a traffic incident. With advance warning, motorists can figuratively see ahead and make informed decisions about their time, route and destination. They will get that information first hand after it is entered via phone lines by authorized NDOT officials. Information will go through the district office and can come from maintenance workers, freeway

ITS in LV

Intelligent transportation systems use technology and communications networks to improve transportation systems and safety. With advanced sensors and other technologies, ITS supports many transportation modes on highways and arterial networks in both urban and rural settings.

Dynamic message signs, an integral part of regional traveler information systems, will be connected to FAST, the Freeway and Arterial System of Transportation, interfacing with other agencies and systems to manage traffic in Las Vegas. FAST will use proven ITS technologies that include:

- **DMS**
- **Ramp meters on freeway entrances**
- **Closed-circuit television**
- **Traffic detection systems**
- **Highway advisory radio**

ITS helps better manage congestion, provide timely traffic information, reduce incident response time and improve mobility.

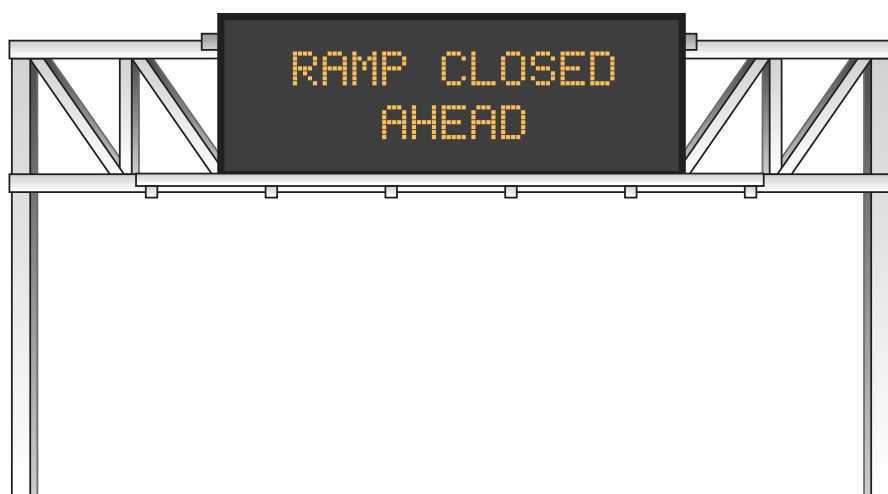
service patrol staff or law enforcement. As more computerized traffic management systems come online in the region, the signs will be plugged into even more transportation networks.

Campbell said more signs are planned for Las Vegas with two DMS included in construction on the I-15/Sahara Interchange reconstruction just beginning and on other planned projects. In northern Nevada, a joint project with Caltrans and District II will result in three DMS on I-80 near Reno with one of them east of Mustang, one west near the California state line and one in the downtown area.

Keeping the signs informative means they will be blank when no advisory is in effect. Research has shown that their impact is diminished if they are always on or display unrelated information.

In some cases the signs will extend above four lanes of traffic. Dambach, Inc. manufactures the \$115,000 signs that will be installed under a contract that also includes building their \$110,000 structural supports. Since traffic control will be a challenge, crews will work between 2 and 4 a.m. to get the job done with the least impact on motorists.

Maintenance of the signs will be under contract with the supplier, Campbell said.



Shared Vision

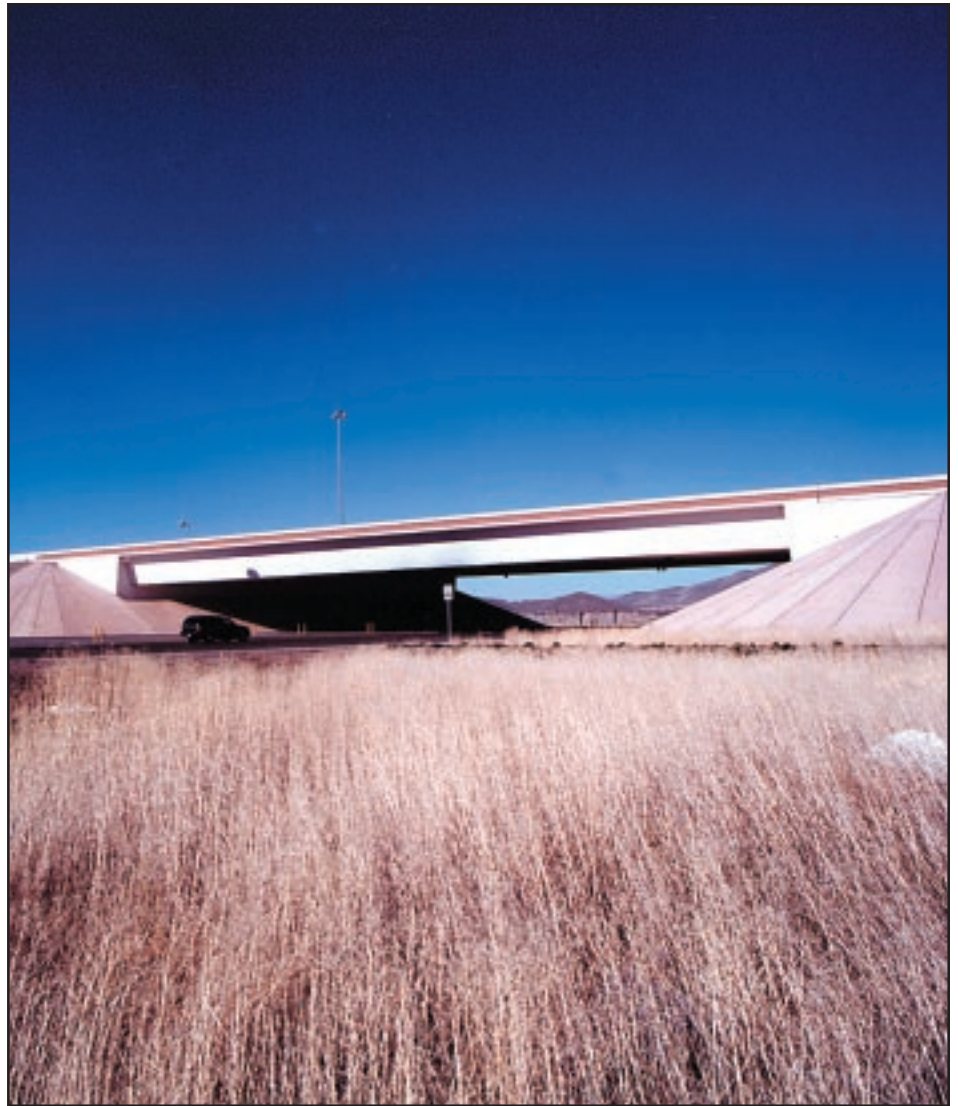
Damonte Ranch Parkway



The largest privately funded road project in northern Nevada came to fruition with the opening of Damonte Ranch Parkway, a \$7.8 million public and private partnership. Completed in January, the south Reno project united Nevada TriPartners and NDOT to produce an investment that will generate business, stimulate the area's economy and improve local access.

Within weeks, booksellers Barnes and Noble located a mammoth distribution center adjacent to the freeway.

Years ago when the I-580 extension in Reno was planned to reach Mt. Rose Highway it passed through quiet pastures near neighboring wetlands. Visionaries knew that it would not be long before the growing area would call for access capable of serving the businesses and industries settling in Damonte Ranch. They were committed to



providing a gateway to the budding community, one that met NDOT standards and future traffic needs.

"It will be just as busy as South Meadows Parkway when it is fully developed," said NDOT's John Bradshaw, Design Division. "It has all the desirable characteristics we look for." Bradshaw worked cooperatively with the TriPartners who invested \$6 million in the interchange to create the design. NDOT financed the \$1.8 million for the bridge and provided the engineering to build the project to complement the freeway. When I-580 was extended it was built with the future interchange in mind.

Nevada TriPartners, which includes Di Loreto South Truckee Meadows, Inc., BDM Development and Steamboat Creek Development, Inc., donated land on the south side of the road previously known as Zolezzi Lane. Once the interchange was completed, the new route became Damonte Ranch Parkway.



Representing Nevada TriPartners, Perry Di Loreto, president of Di Loreto South Truckee Meadows, Inc., left, joined NDOT Director Tom Stephens in celebrating completion of the Damonte Ranch Parkway interchange, northern Nevada's largest privately funded road partnership.

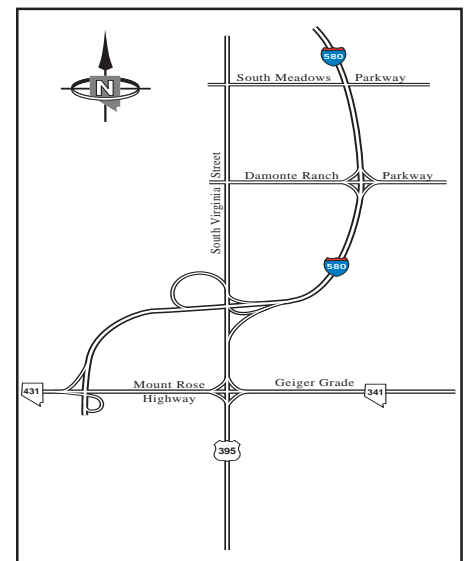
"It was a little tricky because there were several different owners and parcels of land, each with different considerations," Bradshaw said. But cooperatively, the partners worked through the details and found solutions agreeable to all.

"We thought it went very well. Everyone had a team-spirited outlook on things," said Nevada TriPartners' Charlie Carter. "It was a pleasurable experience."

Right of way agents did their part to deliver the project after the partners reached a consensus on the right location, width, alignment and general layout.

TriPartners leaned heavily on NDOT expertise to meet standards. Hydraulics Division's Chris Miller designed some unique drainage structures and systems to help with drainage and to minimize impact to sensitive wetlands in the area. Roadway challenges along with traffic engineering, lighting and signing were also design tasks to tackle for Wayne Nash, Bob Calloway, Frank Csiga, Dan McMartin, Rick Trice, Steve Glodowski and Roger Philippi. NDOT's John Dube and Gary Selmi oversaw construction. Environmental Services Division provided invaluable assistance in locating and designing new features for wetland impact mitigation.

Washoe County's Regional Transportation Commission played a partnering role in the project as well. Engineer Chris Lewis and Howard Reidl represented the RTC, sharing their knowledge and expertise.



Speaking in Harmony

Regulators Communicate with the Trucking and Fuel Industries



Motor Carrier Transport Association's Daryl Capurro.

Among the many hands sharing and regulating fuel tax dollars are, from left: Teri Baltisberger, DMV Management Services and Programs; Eric Scheetz, DMV Compliance Enforcement Division; Ed Harney, Nevada Highway Patrol; and NDOT Operations Analysis Division Chief Russ Law.



"It's always better if we understand each other," said Daryl Capurro. "There is no question that by working together we avoid misunderstandings." As managing director of the Nevada Motor Carrier Transport Association, Capurro plays an important role in the exchange of information between the public and private sectors via the Information Exchange Forum.

Made up of many organizations that operate or regulate the commercial movement of goods, services and sometimes people, the committee is a group that seeks consensus.

"We need to harmonize from an audit standpoint and an enforcement standpoint," Capurro told the forum members who could not agree more.

Motor carriers are accountable to many agencies on even a single issue. Fuel taxation, transport of hazardous waste and registration of special mobile equipment are among the items of interest administered in part by multiple agencies and governed by numerous laws that require the industry's compliance.

Discussing the challenge of heavy construction equipment on southern Nevada highways, the group examines the issues and agrees on the best interest of all.

"That's the common sense approach," said Cheryl Blumstrom, representing the Associated General Contractors, another partner in the process.

Since none of their jobs can be done without the benefit of good roads, protecting the highways physically and financially is everyone's business.

"What kind of damage does it do to the highway?" asked Teri Baltisberger, tax administrator for the Department of Motor Vehicles, who led the meeting and can recite the motor carrier and motor fuel code chapter and verse. Oversight and tracking of motor carrier and motor fuel regulations, legislation, and policies and procedures are her responsibility and the information exchange is her brainchild.

"There was no one place where we all came to work together," Baltisberger said. "Depending on the topic we get different people at each meeting," she said. Among those interested are the Nevada Taxpayers Association, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Nevada Petroleum Marketers and the Department of Agriculture, a diverse group with lots in common.

Coordinating with neighboring states and nations is also the forum's desire where regulations overlap jurisdictions, some the same and many not.

When reconciliation is necessary or laws need to be changed, the group's input is a valuable resource in working out important details and providing information for the benefit of all.

From Pumphernickel to Palisade, New Life for I-80

A \$17.7 million project brings sections of Interstate 80 across rural Nevada a much needed upgrade near Battle Mountain. From Pumphernickel to Palisade, the 56-mile project includes roadbed modification and paving to sections of the freeway as well as rest area repaving at Valmy and Beowawe.

District III Resident Engineer Dana Plumb's Crew 917, which will move to Battle Mountain to oversee the job for NDOT, will be supplemented by consultant construction inspectors Agra Earth and Environmental of Sparks. Granite Construction, contractor for the state, will work Monday through

Saturday. Work began on the project in April and is expected to take 200 working days.

Norma Rutherford led the design effort for NDOT. I-80 links California and Utah through Nevada and serves as a major truck traffic corridor.



Repaving Beowawe's rest area is included in I-80's upgrade.

Minding NDOT's Business: John Neill to Head Administration

In some ways, John Neill holds the keys to the NDOT toolbox. As the new assistant director for administration, Neill oversees divisions that provide employees with many of the tools they need to do their jobs. Every phone, fax and flight, every chip, check and balance fall under his watch.

Neill will be responsible for Accounting, Administrative Services, Data Processing and Telecommunications, Financial Forecasting and Flight Operations. A first priority for Neill is to examine federal

highway funding systems as they affect the business of transportation. He also oversees the administration of contracts and consultant agreements.

Neill was most recently with the Department of Prisons, serving nine years as chief of Fiscal Services and the last two years as assistant director for support services, a position that included many disciplines.

He earned a bachelor of science degree in business administration from the University of Nevada, Reno and was a civil service employee with the Air National Guard

before joining the state. He has 23 years of state service that began at NDOT, just 10 feet from his new office. He was lured away by the state budget office where he spent the next 11 years.

Neill's extensive experience made him a perfect candidate for his new NDOT job. Familiar with the state budget community, he has already worked with many of NDOT's employees and is eager to share his expertise and encourage people to do their best.



Accounting's Robert Chisel, Administrative Services' Jan Christopherson, Data Processing's Jim Demme, Assistant Director for Administration John Neill, Flight Operations' Jim Koester and Financial Forecasting's John Hull.

Beatty—Nevada's Gateway to...

Death Valley in the Spring

"The oranges, yellows and purples are magnificent. I loved this desert the first time I set foot on it," Earl Seely said. At just the right time of year the gateway to Death Valley is splendid and the right time is spring.

Seely fell in love with the desert more than 20 years ago but left to chase mines across America. Now in his third year maintaining NDOT's highways in Beatty, he is tickled to be working in the historic hot spot he can finally call home.

"You either love it or hate it, there's no in between," he said. "You live with the desert or you get out of it."

For Crew 123's Chief Brad Hunt, the attraction was physical. Years of rodeo life left aches and pains, calmed in a way only the desert climate can do. Working for NDOT in a very different climate made Hunt appreciate the 229 lane miles he covers in Beatty. Originally on the Wendover crew at the northeastern border with Utah, he cleared snow sometimes nine months out of the year on I-80 at Oasis and Pequop Summit.

"We plowed three times last year," Hunt says, hardly able to hold back a smile. In Beatty, two miles with two and a half



Lyle Bringham, left, with Hunt.

inches is a sudden surprise. They cover 14 miles of state routes 373 and 374, and 82 miles of U.S. 95 to Scotty's Junction, the lifeline to Death Valley for tourists, outdoor adventurers and motor sports enthusiasts who flock to the territory.

Scotty's Castle, the lavish home of early entrepreneur and flamboyant Death Valley

legend Walter Scott, now a part of the national park, draws global crowds.

Based 11 miles from the state line, their terrain abuts Death Valley National Park before crossing over into California, where the climate changes drastically, with temperatures increasing 30 degrees and elevations dropping from 3,300 feet above sea level to negative numbers.



Brad Hunt, left, and Earl Seely, Crew 123, replace shoulder signs.

Beatty, pronounced *bay-tee*, lies on U.S. 95, the main artery between Las Vegas and Reno. At 120 miles north of Las Vegas and 330 miles from Reno, the township is one square mile, unincorporated and unspoiled.

"It's still one of those nice quiet towns," said Hunt, whose 14-year-old son Riley sees it as a social center. "He can ride his bike in a neighborhood for the first time." Compared to the





Ranger Connie Patterson.

northern Nevada isolation where Riley grew up, at a population of about 1,000, Beatty is big.

Beatty's population swells and shrinks with the price of gold. With potable water, at one time Beatty was a gold center for the Bullfrog Gold District, served by three railroads.

Booms and busts brought gold mines and their employees in and out but the town's spirit of hospitality never changed.

NDOT in the Economy

- \$6.5 million to reconstruct 67 miles of U.S. 95 near Amargosa Valley, contractor FNF, Inc., 1999
- \$4.4 million for 94 miles of U.S. 95 near Beatty, contractor FNF, Inc., 1999
- \$3.6 million to improve U.S. 95 at Springdale, Frehner Construction, 1998
- Plymouth Voyager and Dodge Maxi Van awarded to Nye County Senior Center

Five hotels, three casinos and six RV parks welcome travelers. Beatty hosts a BMX track, golf course, pool, tennis courts a baseball field and a shooting range. A local library, historical museum, Department of Energy Science Center and National Park visitor's center offer varied perspectives on the unique land.

In the neighborhood, remnants of Rhyolite, once known as the Queen City of Death Valley reflect the bygone era of the previous turn of the century. Four miles from Beatty, the still popular ghost town and artist showcase was once a hub for western gold mining, complete with a

stock exchange, bank and foundry. It also sported a jewelry store, symphony and hospital. The train depot is among the buildings still standing in stark contrast to the surrounding sage and sky.

Once owned by Charles Schwab, the Rhyolite mine could produce 300 tons of ore a day. But when financial panic changed the boom to bust, the town's two electric plants closed and by 1916 Rhyolite went dark.

Sand dunes, a national wildlife refuge and burro races are among the attractions that bring tourists to town. An estimated 2.25 million visitors explore the territory each year pumping critical cash into the local economy and those tourists depend on NDOT highways to get there safely.

"We've done a lot of shoulder work widening them out so your line of sight ,

is good and slopes are too," Hunt said. Tonopah's Crew 171 came to help the three-person Beatty team and Goldfield's crew lent a hand.

As with many rural stations, radio communication is a challenge with 100-foot windows to make a good connection.

Seely and partner Lyle Bringhurst also serve on the volunteer fire department, responding to traffic emergencies while Hunt wears the NDOT hat, teaming up with the lone Nevada Highway Patrolman John Donahoe and Nye County sheriffs.

With an average six days of rain per year, pavement needs constant attention to beat the heat and dust control becomes a big issue for the desert crew. Highways are also critical to businesses such as Cinderlite, whose volcanic products originate 20 miles south of town. U.S.

Ecology operates a hazardous waste facility that depends on good transportation, as do ranching, dairy, sod and other enterprises in the territory that must get their goods to far away markets.



Left:
The art of ghost town mining.
Below:
Tourists abound; The 21st century gold mine.



